



Interview Summary: Brad Wozny, Canada Border Service Agency

Please note that this Interview Summary should be read in conjunction with: the Canada Border Services Agency (“**CBSA**”)’s Institutional Report; the witness summary for the CBSA panel, which consisted of John Ossowski (the former President), Ted Gallivan (the Executive Vice-President), Scott Harris (the Vice-President of Intelligence and Enforcement), and Christine Durocher (the Regional Director General of the Southern Ontario Region); the witness summary for Nina Patel (the Regional Director General of the Pacific Region); and the witness summary for Lynne Lamarche (the Director of the Operational Guidance Division).

Brad Wozny was interviewed by Shantona Chaudhury, John Mather, and Alexandra Heine on September 2, 2022. Questions about Mr. Wozny’s interview should be directed to Ms. Heine.

Text contained in [square brackets] are explanatory notes provided by Commission Counsel to assist the reader.

Background

The CBSA is responsible for providing integrated border services that support national security and public safety priorities and facilitate the free flow of persons and goods across international borders. The CBSA operates ports of entry (“**POEs**”) across the country.

Mr. Wozny is the Regional Director General for the CBSA’s Prairie Region, which includes Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the North West Territories.

During the Freedom Convoy (“**Convoy**”), Mr. Wozny was the senior CBSA official in the Prairie Region and in that sense led the CBSA’s response to the protests and blockades located at or around the Coutts and Emerson Ports of Entry (“**POEs**”), which are located in Alberta and Manitoba respectively. Mr. Wozny works out of the Winnipeg office; he was not physically at the Alberta and Manitoba POEs.

The Freedom Convoy Protest in Emerson, Manitoba

The Arrival of the Protesters

Mr. Wozny explained that the first slow roll protest occurred at or near Emerson, Manitoba, on January 17. That initial protest died down shortly thereafter.

Impact of the Protest and Blockade on the Emerson POE

The level of protest and slow roll activity ebbed and flowed. Some additional slow rolls, protests, and attempted blockades occurred around January 18, February 3, and



February 7-9. Mr. Wozny stated that the protesters participating in these activities were generally more willing to allow traffic to pass through from time to time and so there was no need for the CBSA to start diverting traffic from the Emerson POE to neighboring POEs. However, the CBSA planned for alternative routes, hours of operation and Canada Food Inspection Agency (“**CFIA**”) and United States Department of Agriculture (“**USDA**”) services to be available should the need arise.

Mr. Wozny explained that the blockade at the Emerson POE began on February 10.

The protesters sporadically let vehicles pass through and so there was still some traffic flowing through the POE. The rest of the traffic was diverted away from Emerson to smaller neighboring POEs, which increased travel times and resulted in longer border wait times. Mr. Wozny nevertheless stated that commercial goods were able to flow through. To his knowledge, all vehicles carrying commercial goods that were diverted made it across the Canada-US border.

Mr. Wozny stated that the overall impact of the protests and blockades on the Emerson POE was relatively minor because, having had the benefit of dealing with the protesters in Coutts, the CBSA and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (“**RCMP**”) [which is the police of jurisdiction] in Emerson were better prepared. For instance, the CBSA knew it had to be prepared to divert traffic by identifying alternate POEs, aligning the United States Customs and Border Protection (“**US CBP**”), and securing veterinary services. It also knew that it had to start liaising with the RCMP early.

The protester activity in Emerson increased wait time at POEs where the traffic was diverted, primarily the Gretna POE as well as Tolstoy, Estevan and Sprague, where the CBSA extended operating hours.

The End of the Emerson Blockade

As Mr. Wozny described it, the seizures and arrests in Coutts on February 14 took the wind out of the protesters’ sail in Emerson. The Emerson blockade cleared out by February 16 and services resumed at the Emerson POE. Mr. Wozny noted that there may have been subsequent small slow rolls, but they did not impact POE operations.

The Freedom Convoy Protest and Blockade in Coutts, Alberta

The Arrival of the Protesters

[The slow roll protest in Alberta started on or around January 28.] The protesters drove down Highway 4 [the main highway that leads to the Coutts POE] and arrived in Coutts on January 29. Mr. Wozny said the vehicles blocked the highway north of the POE. At that time, he did not have a sense that the protest activity would last as long as it did and did not expect the extended blockades that occurred. In the early stages, most of the information CBSA received about the protests was from open sources.



Since the protesters had parked north of the POE and not on CBSA's property, Mr. Wozny explained that the CBSA's initial response was just to monitor the protest carefully. At this point, CBSA's mitigation was minimal but it was planning for diversion of traffic to other POEs. CBSA liaised with the RCMP, which is the police of jurisdiction in the region. CBSA's responsibility was limited to the POEs and consisted of monitoring protest activity and ensuring the safety and security of its employees and the traveling public.

Impact of the Protest and Blockade on the Coutts POE

Once the CBSA received information from the RCMP that the protesters were planning on blockading Highway 4, Mr. Wozny became concerned with the capacity of alternative POEs to process travelers and commercial goods. One of his top priorities was to ensure that loads carrying perishable goods and live animals were diverted, since delays for those loads could be problematic. CBSA took guidance from the RCMP on route diversions and worked with US CBP to increase capacity at alternative POEs so that vehicles could move across the border.

Mr. Wozny arranged for commercial traffic to be diverted to the neighboring POEs of Del Bonita and Carway. He also reached out to the United States Customs and Border Protection ("US CBP") to ensure that the US-side of the POEs was ready for the traffic diversions.

At that point, the CBSA shifted from monitoring to active response. Mr. Wozny explained that he arranged for commercial traffic to be diverted to alternate POEs in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

Mr. Wozny stated that the CBSA worked with the RCMP, US CBP, CFIA and USDA to facilitate the movement of traffic and goods to alternative POEs (in Alberta, the Del Bonita and Carway POEs). Traffic moving southbound would cross into the US at those alternative POEs and then would move across to Sweetgrass, Montana, to access the USDA inspection services. Northbound vehicles would drive up to Sweetgrass, where they were inspected by CFIA and their loads were sealed, and then move across to Del Bonita to enter Canada.

Mr. Wozny explained that he received a letter from the Deputy Commissioner of the RCMP K Division [Alberta], Curtis Zablocki, on February 11 requesting that the CBSA suspend the POE's services.¹ The request was approved on February 12.²

¹ Letter from Curtis Zablocki to Brad Wozni, February 11, 2022, **PB.CAN.00008470_REL**.

² Email Exchange between Minister Mendicino, John Ossowski, Brad Wozny, etc. Approving the RCMP Request to Suspend Services at the Coutts POE, February 12, 2022, **PB.CAN.00000008_REL**.



As Mr. Wozny explained, the RCMP made the request because, as they were moving towards enforcement and clearing the blockades, they were concerned about the safety and security of their officers, and they wanted to control the blockade sites. Although the majority of vehicles were being diverted to Del Bonita and Carway, prior to February 10, the Coutts POE was still open and processing vehicles on both the Canada and US side. The highway was closed in both directions, but ultimately, if vehicles arrived at the POE, they would be processed. During this time, CBSA employees were also using the side road to get to work. Mr. Wozny understood that the RCMP were concerned that if a vehicle came through the POE during their enforcement activities, it could present a risk to their safety.

To Mr. Wozny's knowledge, all vehicles carrying commercial goods that were diverted from Coutts during the protests made it across the Canada-US border at other locations. He believed, however, that since commercial companies were aware of the protests, fewer goods may have attempted to cross the border at this location during this time.

Communications with Partner Agencies

Mr. Wozny described how, throughout the events in Coutts, he had many Microsoft Teams meetings with the US CBP, CFIA, and RCMP to discuss logistics and share information.

Mr. Wozny clarified that he did not receive any tactical or operational information from the RCMP. He received information related to blockades locations and the movement of protesters as it related to traffic diversions. He specifically explained that although he was generally aware that the RCMP were conducting an operation in Coutts on February 13 and 14, he did not know that the operation involved seizing a cache of firearms and arresting protesters.

Mr. Wozny's point of contact at the RCMP was Mr. Zablocki.

The End of the Coutts Protest

The Coutts protesters dispersed after the seizures and arrests [that occurred early the morning of February 14]. Services resumed at Coutts on February 15. The RCMP advised the CBSA that the blockades had been cleared and the highway was open; the RCMP no longer required the service suspension or closure of the Coutts POE for the purposes of their enforcement operations.

The CBSA reopened the Coutts POE shortly after being reassured by the RCMP that it expected to keep the highway clear.



The Invocation of the *Emergencies Act*

Mr. Wozny understood that the *Emergencies Act* gave the CBSA the power to deny foreign nationals entry who wanted to come into Canada to participate in the protests. He did not know whether that power had been used.

Mr. Wozny did not know whether there had been a high volume of people who were coming into Canada to participate in the protests prior to the invocation of the *Emergencies Act*. He recalled that he saw some social media posts about groups wanting to come to Canada, but that this did not come to fruition.